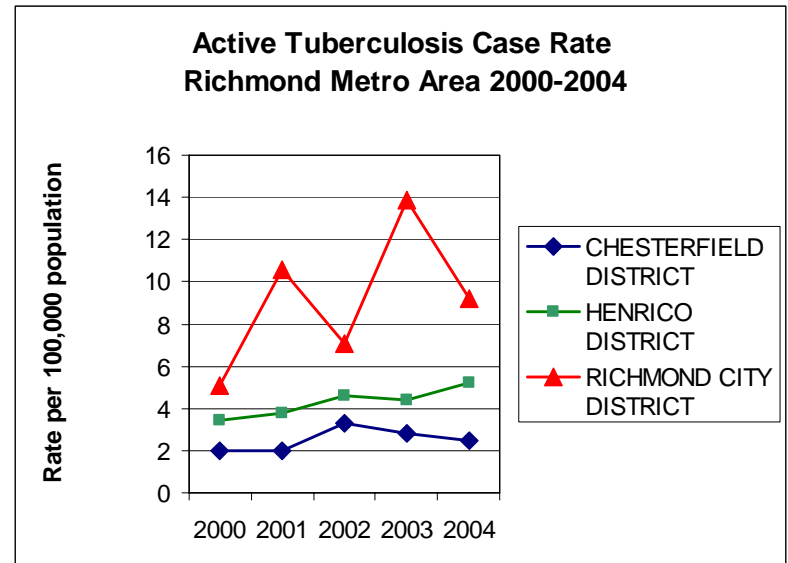


Communicable Disease Update: Tuberculosis

The Richmond metro area continues to experience cases of active tuberculosis. To date, in Henrico, the number of reported active TB cases equals the number reported for all of 2004. Given the graphic on the right and the changing demographics, Henrico Health Department expects continued significant TB activity over the near future.

Control of TB in our community will depend on prompt and accurate diagnosis and reporting. As you know, the Code of Virginia §32.1-50.1 requires physicians to report cases of active TB and to assure that treatment plans are approved by the local health director prior to patient discharge. This process ensures that care coordination, including directly-observed therapy (DOT), is in place prior to patient discharge.



Patients with positive TB skin tests (TST), absence of TB symptoms and negative CXR do not need to be reported to the local health department. These persons with latent TB infection (LTBI) should be offered preventive therapy consistent with the most recent guidelines. Recall that TST interpretation depends on the patient's risk stratification.

Clinicians can access the most current TB screening and treatment guidelines, review TB control laws and find required forms at: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/epi/tb/mdrnpage.htm>. TB treatment guidelines are available for Palm OS devices at: http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/tb/pubs/PDA_TBGuidelines/PDA_treatment_guidelines.htm

Arboviral Disease Prevention: CDC has an excellent patient education web site concerning tick bite prevention. Direct your patients to <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/ticktips2005/> for "Tick Tips."

Hurricane Season begins June 1: In preparing your patients for hurricanes and other severe weather events, remind them to be sure they have an adequate supply of prescription medications and pharmaceutical supplies to last at least 3 to 7 days. Also, pharmaceuticals that become contaminated by flood waters will have to be discarded. Please review your practice's emergency plans and ensure that your patients know how to contact you during emergencies and that you have communication backup contingencies. CDC has significant resources related to hurricane preparedness at: <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/>

Rabies Update: Henrico ordinance Chapter 5, Sec. 5-172 requires that all incidents involving patients under evaluation for animal bites or contamination of an open wound or mucous membrane from bats, dogs, cats, ferrets or other terrestrial mammals be reported to police within 24 hours. Be prepared to provide animal control officers with a description of the incident including patient demographics, location of the incident and whether the animal has been captured. Henrico County Animal Control can be contacted at (804) 652-3360. All other potential rabies inquiries can be made to the Henrico County Health Department at (804) 501-4522. An algorithm for rabies evaluation guidance is located at www.publichealthbytes.org, under "Rabies Resources."

Prevention updates: The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recently updated its 2002 hormone replacement therapy recommendations (see <http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/uspstf05/ht/htpostmenrs.htm>). The USPSTF recommends:

- against the routine use of combined estrogen and progestin for the prevention of chronic conditions in postmenopausal women.
- against the routine use of unopposed estrogen for the prevention of chronic conditions in postmenopausal women who have had a hysterectomy.